

# Learning to Hunt

Hosting a hunting-  
based outdoor skills  
event in your  
community



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# Ways of Hunting

Field techniques for hunting

Participants learn various methods of hunting, including stalking, still hunting, hunting from blinds, hunting from stands, and hunting while driving game.



# Station 9

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## Objectives

### Participants shall:

demonstrate several different methods of hunting.

state when hunters would use the particular methods of hunting (for what species and in what terrain).

describe the advantages and disadvantages of each method of hunting.

state the safety rules for conducting a drive.

explain what "zoned viewing" is.

describe where hunting blinds should be placed in relation to wind direction.

construct a hunting blind.

## Equipment

Outdoor site with dry leaves or indoor gym with eggshells, peanut shells or foam peanuts used in packaging

Broom for indoor cleanup

2 6" pieces of 2"x4" lumber

Camera flash attachment or strobe light

1 bottle of perfume or animal scent

Several cotton balls

Electric fan, if doing the indoor activity

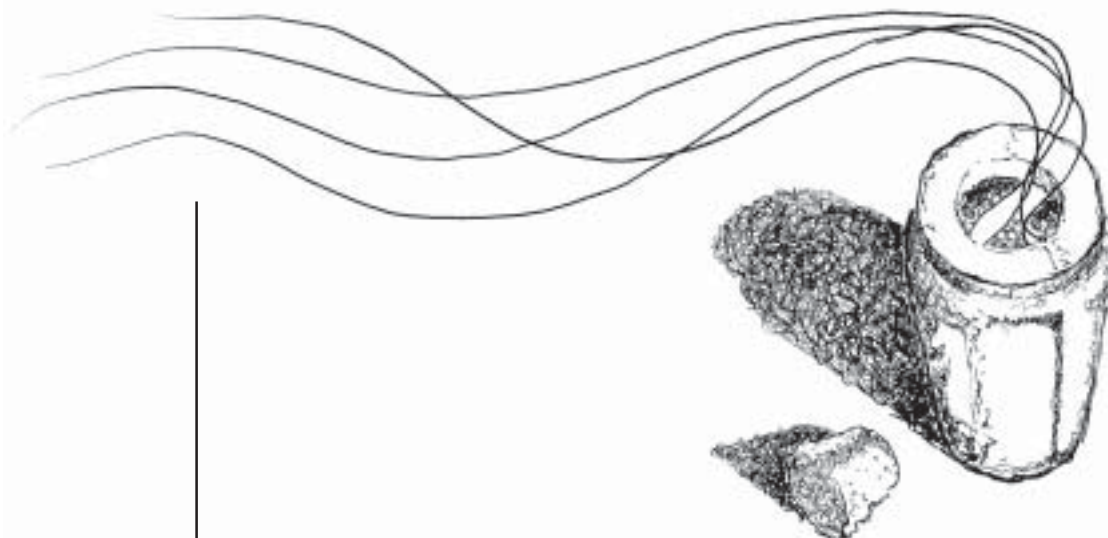
Extension cord, if needed for indoor activity

Several manufactured portable tree stands, with appropriate safety gear

Several sets of portable blinds, camouflage blind material, and natural blind materials

Ground stands (such as plastic buckets with padded seats)

Several unloaded rifles and shotguns



## Station Setup

The six methods of hunting are best demonstrated in an outdoor setting. It is preferable to have a wooded area with crisp, crunchy leaves on the ground, a wild meadow with tall weeds and grasses, and a pond or wetland area.

If an outdoor site is not available, or in case of inclement weather, you can simulate some hunting techniques by using a large indoor room with an uncarpeted floor.

Scatter eggshells, peanut shells or foam peanuts across the floor. These simulate the noisy, crackling sound of leaves underfoot. One indoor-adapted demonstration requires a room with a fan, plus an extension cord, if necessary. Have a broom handy for indoor clean-up.

Set up a variety of manufactured and homemade styles of blinds.

Set up a variety of tree stands in sturdy trees, save at least one stand for the group to assemble and erect onto a tree.



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### Activity

#### Procedure

For this activity, demonstrate each of the six basic methods of hunting. Then have participants try these same six methods. Each method is detailed below. Explain each to your participants.

##### Stalking

Stalking is the slow, silent pursuit of an animal that allows the hunter to get close enough for a good, clean shot. A crouched position is the best for pursuing animals by stalking because it makes your body less noticeable. In this position the hunter walks quietly and slowly, pursuing animals of interest.

##### Still hunting

Still hunting is the continuous movement of a hunter through an animal's environment in hopes of finding the desired game. The hunter takes a few steps, stops, looks around – sometimes with binoculars – and listens for the slightest sound of the game animal being hunted. By walking in this silent manner, the hunter is less likely to be observed by animals. For deer hunting, still hunting is perhaps the most challenging and difficult method of hunting. The still hunting method can be quite productive for white-

tailed deer, especially after a rain when the fallen leaves of the woods are much quieter.

Stalking and still hunting techniques are learned and improved by study and practice. Hunters need to know an animal's habits and habitat, have concentration and self-control, and sharpen their senses. The reward for practicing and improving these skills should be increased opportunities to observe wildlife more closely.

Physically demonstrate the following two positions to your participants. Then have them try the same positions as a group. Stress the need to be very quiet.





**Crouched position.** Have participants practice moving about in this position for a while. Ask them to describe the advantages of a crouched position.

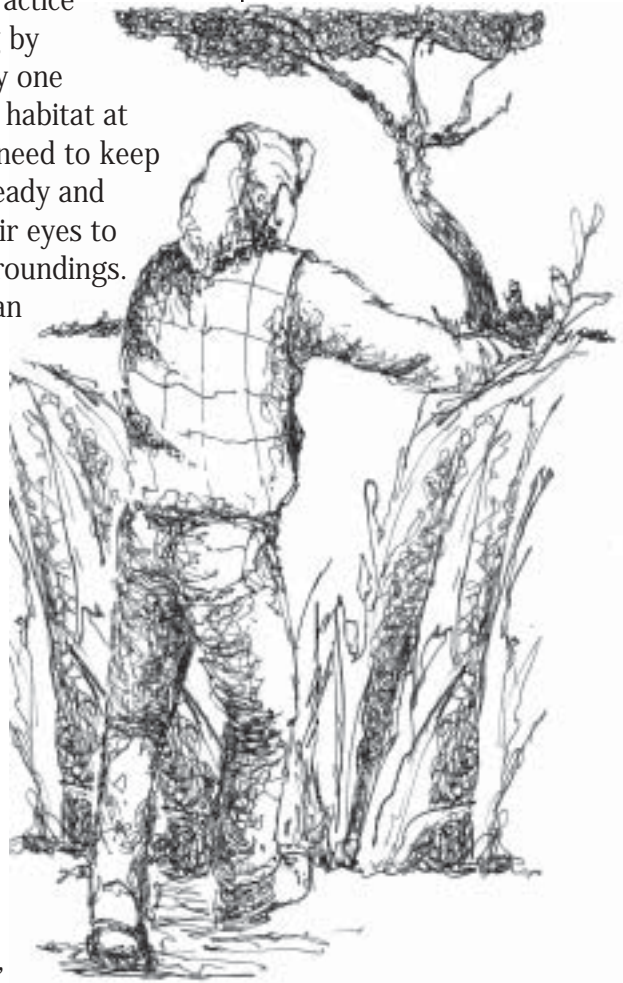
**Freeze position.** There are certain situations when freezing is extremely important. Have participants practice freezing in different positions. Ask questions such as: When should you freeze? How long can you sit absolutely still?

Discuss the following five attributes that good still hunters and stalkers possess and hone when they are hunting. Have participants practice each of these:

**Quiet movement.** Have participants practice placing their feet as quietly as possible while maneuvering through a course with noisy material underfoot. Outdoors, a forest floor covered with dry leaves is a good practice environment. Indoors, they can walk through eggshells, peanut shells or foam peanuts on the floor.

**Slow movement.** Ask participants to demonstrate how animals move through the woods. Do deer prance erratically or move deliberately? Do rabbits run in a straight line?

**Zoned viewing.** To help improve their ability to observe wildlife, hunters should practice zoned viewing. Have participants practice zoned viewing by looking at only one portion of the habitat at a time. They need to keep their heads steady and move only their eyes to scan their surroundings. In order to scan beyond the reach of their eyesight, then can then practice moving their heads very, very slowly to view another zone. Using this method, hunters often see only a part of the animal at first, such as the nose, ears, tail, or back.



**Concentration.** To be successful, hunters must maintain slow body and head movements even when unexpected movements flash around them. Have participants practice slow, deliberate movements. When they are not looking your way, clap the two wooden blocks together, flash the camera

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strobe, or make sudden movements as distractions.

**Self-control.** Explain that successful hunters suppress sneezes by pressing a finger to the bridge of the nose. They muffle coughs with their arms.

Now take participants to an outdoor setting. Have them assess the activity area and look for factors that will influence the success of stalking or still hunting. They should consider things like:

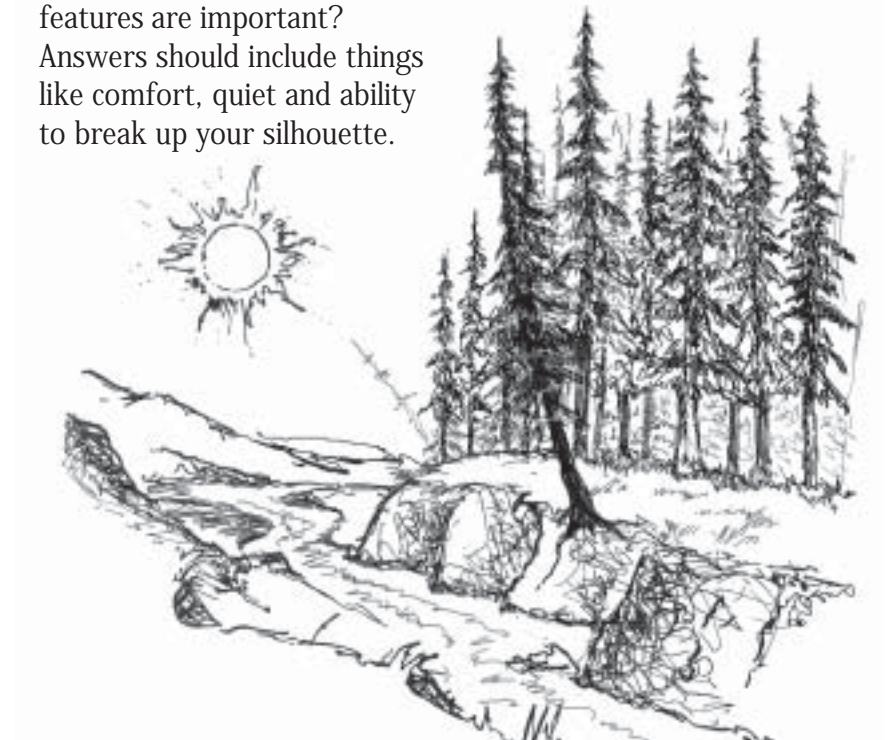
**Cover.** What is good cover? Examples may include trees, rocks, small hills, beaver dams, cattails and other vegetation. How can it be used?

**Rest points.** When should hunters use rest points? What features are important? Answers should include things like comfort, quiet and ability to break up your silhouette.

**Wind direction.** Dab a cotton ball with perfume or animal scent. Briefly hold the cotton ball downwind, then upwind from the group. Ask participants how wind helps hunters. How does it help wildlife? You can simulate this activity indoors using an electric fan instead of natural wind.

**Sun location.** Ask how the location and intensity of sunlight can help or hinder the hunter.

Discuss when stalking and still hunting would be used. What kinds of game animals can be hunted this way? Deer, elk, moose and even squirrel and rabbits can be hunted this way.





## Hunting from blinds

Explain to participants that hunters often hunt wild turkeys, waterfowl and sometimes deer while concealed within a blind. Discuss how, when and why hunters would want to set up and use a blind. Explain that hunting from a blind lets the hunter observe and detect an animal's movement before it is aware of the hunter's presence. Blinds may be store-bought or homemade. Hi-tech or very earthy. They may consist of metal poles stuck in the ground and draped with camouflaged material. Or they may be constructed entirely out of natural materials such as sticks, brush, cattails and leaves.

Set up some different types of blinds for the participants to experience. Have some that participants can set up themselves. Before they try setting up a blind, ask them from which direction the wind is blowing. Then, considering this wind direction, ask them where they think they should place a blind. Tell them that for deer hunting, they should always place their blind down wind from where they think the deer will be coming, since these animals have such a powerful sense of smell. For turkey hunting, hunters should place their blind in a safe spot where they think a turkey will arrive. For waterfowl, which land into the wind, hunters should place their blind with the wind blowing

at their back. Tell the participants that they should always try to remain as hidden from their quarry as much as possible, without interfering with their ability to see the approaching game, or safely use their firearm when the game is within range.



Ask your participants to work in groups of two or three and to construct a blind in an appropriate place for a particular type of animal. If you are near a pond, ask them to set up a blind for hunting waterfowl. If you are in a wooded area, ask them to set up a blind for hunting wild turkey or deer.

After the teams have constructed their blinds, assemble the entire group and walk from one blind to the next. Ask each team to describe why they selected their site to set up their blind. Ask them how easy it was to use their set of blind-building materials. Discuss portability of blinds, and

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when manufactured blinds may be more valuable than natural blinds. Would you want to hike several miles into the woods carrying your gun, a backpack, and a manufactured blind? Or would you prefer to use natural materials found around the hunting site? The group can critique each blind and placement of the blind.

### **Hunting from ground stands**

Explain that another method of hunting is to hunt from a ground stand. This may be done standing or seated. Usually the hunter

stands or sits behind a tree or rock or other natural object that helps conceal his or her body. When hunting from a ground stand, a hunter is usually less concealed than when hunting from a blind.

Seat one or more participants at a ground stand and have them stay seated for several minutes. Tell them it is necessary to stay very still. Stress that if they must move, they should move very slowly. They need to scan the surrounding area with their eyes only, not moving their head. Tell the group that the most successful ground stand hunters stay seated through long hours and poor weather. The advantages of hunting from a ground stand are that this method is well-suited for small areas, it is safer than hunting out of tree stands or driving game, it often provides for easy shots, it is less strenuous and requires less planning. The disadvantages are that there is less action and so boredom sometimes sets in. The hunter has to wait for an animal to come by in its normal daily routine, has to attract it through the use of game calls or has to wait until the animal gets pushed toward the stand by other hunters in the neighboring area. Deer and wild turkey are often hunted using this method.



## Hunting from tree stands

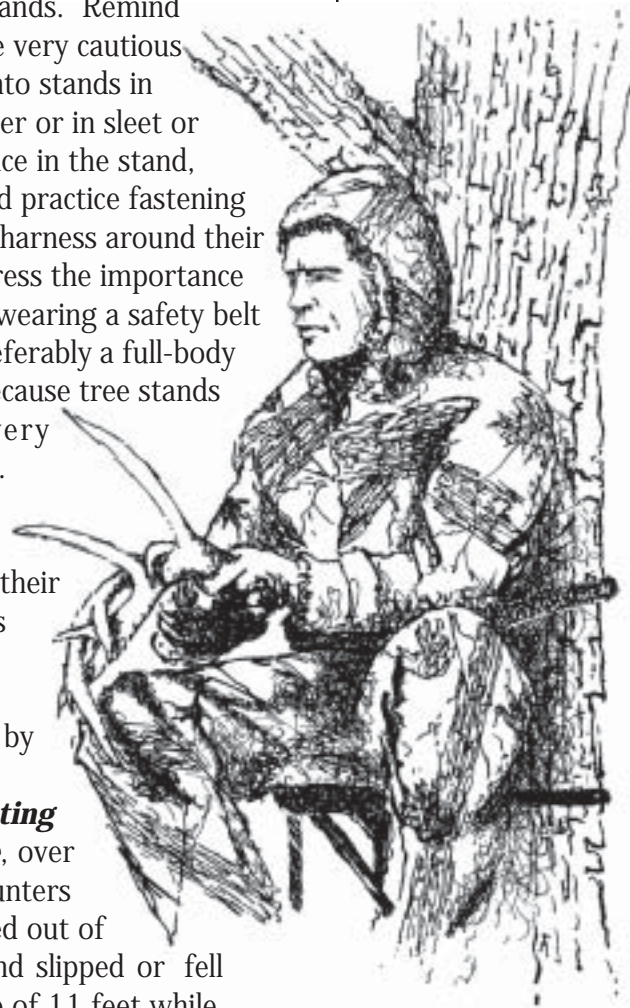
Next, take participants to an area where you have set up some different types of portable, manufactured tree stands. Make sure that each tree stand has a safety harness. Ask participants what kinds of game animals can be hunted from tree stands? Hunting deer or bear from tree stands has become increasingly popular throughout Wisconsin because hunters know the advantages of being perched 15 to 20 feet above the forest floor. Because the hunter is above the animal's normal field of vision, the tree stand reduces the chance of being seen. Tree stands offer a larger field of view. They help the hunter get the human scent off the ground and up into the air where wind currents can waft it away.

Remind participants that if they choose to use a tree stand, they should practice setting it up before the hunting season. Read and strictly follow the manufacturer's directions. Never modify the equipment. Make sure the equipment is in good shape and that the straps and harnesses and attachments are not frayed or worn. If time allows, have participants assemble a tree stand. Have them choose a site for placing the stand. Discuss the proper diameter and height of tree to use. Stress the need to be careful in selecting the kind of trees to which the stand will be

mounted. Smooth-barked trees such as beech, maple, birch and aspen may not hold a stand well, causing it to slip after setup. Allow them to erect the stand against an appropriate tree. If time is limited, then you may choose to erect several tree stands prior to your program.

Allow participants to practice safely ascending and descending the tree stands. Remind them to be very cautious climbing into stands in wet weather or in sleet or snow. Once in the stand, they should practice fastening the safety harness around their bodies. Stress the importance of always wearing a safety belt device, preferably a full-body harness because tree stands can be very dangerous.

Many hunters fall out of their tree stands every year. In a study conducted by ***Deer and Deer Hunting Magazine***, over 35% of hunters who hunted out of a tree stand slipped or fell an average of 11 feet while climbing up or down from their position. Over 80% who fell off





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their tree stands were not wearing any safety harnesses or belts. Injury is almost certain when falling these distances and can be disabling. Remoteness and isolation of the stand from possible rescuers adds to the danger of hunting in stands. The primary cause of falling was structural failure of the stand, ladder or tree steps. Slips, missteps, broken branches and loss of balance were also reasons given for these falls. Fatigue, drowsiness and wet weather and heavy dew contributed to some of the falls.

Once participants are strapped into a tree stand, ask them to observe the surrounding landscape. Next, have participants descend the stand, and tie a rope securely around the butt end of the gun. Ask them to climb back into the stand, tie their harnesses on and haul up the gun using a rope. Emphasize the need to always check to make sure the gun is unloaded before hoisting up into the tree stand.

You should tell participants that the use of tree screws (for foot holds) is illegal on public lands.

### **Hunting by driving game**

Discuss the technique of hunting by driving game. In this technique several hunters are placed, as **standers**, at one end of a plot of land to wait for the game to be driven to them by **drivers**. The drivers walk slowly and methodically through the area toward the standers, keeping abreast of the other drivers and pausing often. Pausing during the drive often makes an animal come out of cover.

Point out the inherent danger of having friends or family members in stands at the opposite end of a field or woods, pointing loaded firearms in the general direction of the drivers, who are also carrying loaded firearms. Stress the need for extreme caution. Emphasize the importance of knowing where all other hunters are at all times. It is imperative that all standers and drivers meet ahead of time before the drive and discuss their plan. Everyone must carry through with the plan. To promote safety and improve the success of the hunt, the group should select a drive leader to be responsible for commanding the drive. Stress the following safety rules:

*Start the drive at the correct time.*

*Place standers at an elevated point so that they are shooting down*

*at their game animal, rather than out toward where the drivers are walking.*

*Give standers adequate time to quietly move to their stands so they don't spook the animals.*

*Keep an even line of drivers.*

*Set a pace so slower people, or those walking through dense or extremely difficult terrain, can keep up.*

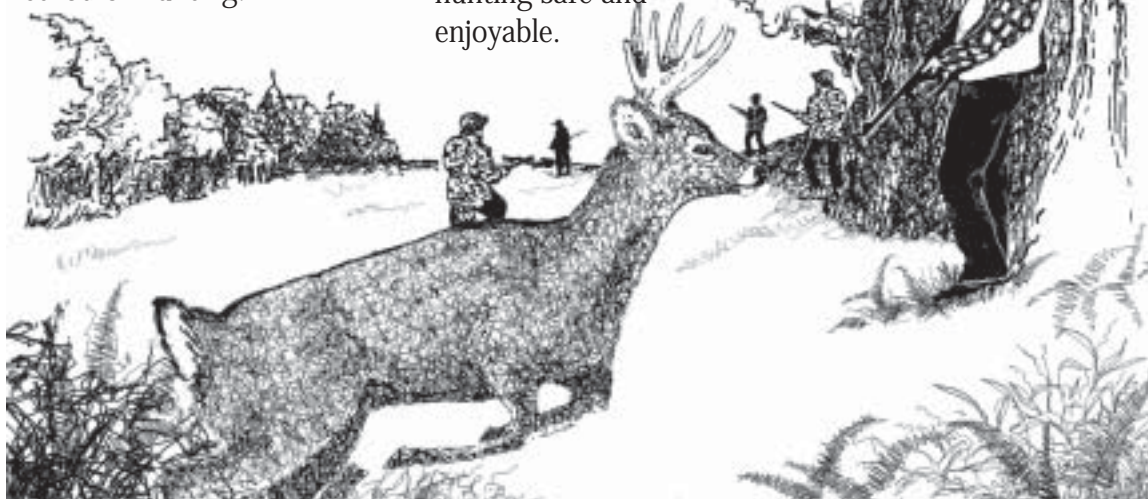
*Maintain the proper direction so the drive ends up where intended.*

*At the end of the drive, account for all participants.*

Point out to your participants the advantages and disadvantages of this method of hunting. An

advantage is that it is an effective method for locating and moving game animals toward other hunters in the party. This method provides a lot of action, particularly for the drivers. And it also involves a good deal of camaraderie among the members of the hunting party. The disadvantages are that this technique takes more people to hunt and it is much more potentially dangerous than the other methods of hunting.

Discuss the versatility of drive-type hunting. This system can work with one or two people driving and ten or twelve people standing, or just the opposite. A drive can also be very successful with one person standing and one person driving. Emphasize that the participants must know their game and their countryside to make this type of hunting safe and enjoyable.



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Now, plan a simulated deer drive in a nearby field. Designate three participants as “standers,” two as “deer,” and the remainder as “drivers.” Before the activity, discuss the keen sense of smell and hearing that deer possess. Tell participants that a bedded deer often sits tight when a person walks by it in the woods. But they often get spooked if the person stops for a while. Discuss how sound travels in cold weather versus hot weather, and how wind carries odors.

On one side of a field, line up the three standers an equal distance apart. On the other side of the field, line up the drivers. Ask the two lines to turn their backs to the field while the remaining two “deer” hide in the tall grasses of the field.

When the “deer” are hidden, have the drivers begin moving forward across the field toward the standers. As the “deer” become crowded between the drivers and the standers, they must decide how long they will hide and when they will flee.



End of Teaching Station





## References

- 4-H Shooting Sports Hunting Curriculum***, edited by: Ronald A. Howard, Jr. and James E. Knight. (curriculum guide)
- Tom Brown's Field Guide to Nature Observation and Tracking***, Tom Brown, Jr. with Brandt Morgan, Berkley Publishing, 1989.